

Missouri State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

*Annual Report
October 1, 2010 - September 30, 2011*



• Annual Report •

Annual Report 2011

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Purpose

The purpose of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind includes, but is not limited to:

- Act as a forum through which citizens with blindness, parents, providers, and other interested Missourians can voice their opinions and constructive criticisms, make recommendations and give public recognition for services being performed on their behalf by RSB;
- Serve jointly with RSB in its activities to improve the services, programs and facilities for individuals with blindness and visual impairments;
- Receive from RSB information concerning the intents and objectives of RSB so that the Council, in turn, can pass this information on to individuals with blindness.

"Just because a man lacks the use of his eyes doesn't mean he lacks vision."

Stevie Wonder

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Letter From the Chairman of the State Rehabilitation Council

Dear Fellow Missourians:

As Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), it is my honor to submit, with my colleagues, the 2011 Annual Report. The SRC is responsible for reviewing, analyzing and advising Missouri Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB), an agency in the Missouri Division of Family Support (DFS), on its policies and provision of rehabilitation services to Missourians who are blind or visually impaired. This council is dedicated to working with RSB to assist visually impaired Missourians to become self-supporting and fully participating members of society.

The US Department of Labor reported an unemployment rate among working-age people with disabilities of 71.4% in 2010. This rate of unemployment, along with increased incidence of diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration, demonstrates the critical role that RSB plays in the lives of visually impaired Missourians. Improved results from RSB during these challenging times show that RSB and its leadership are committed to its purpose and to meeting the growing challenges facing our fellow citizens.

I offer sincere appreciation to the honorable Jay Nixon, Governor of the State of Missouri, Missouri businesses and other stakeholders for their support in creating an environment so that people with vision loss can realize their full potential.

It is the council's goal that this report provides an informative overview of the activities of RSB and we would be pleased to answer any questions about this report, the operations of RSB, or the work of the council.

Respectfully Submitted,

Clay C. Berry
State Rehabilitation Council Chairman
Director of Education & Rehabilitation
Alphapointe Association for the Blind



Message from the Director of the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

Dear Fellow Missourians:

Today we have the capability to help all persons with disabilities overcome the barriers resulting from their disabilities. Today it is possible for virtually every person with a disability to work. Today the barriers resulting from disabilities can be eliminated through compensatory training techniques, accommodations, remediation strategies, barrier removal, and other measures. Today through such efforts individuals with disabilities can realize their potential in society. Beyond the physical, communication, and attitudinal barriers that persons with disabilities confront, it is also the beliefs and actions of people with disabilities themselves. To fulfill one's potential we must come to value ourselves with the highest regard, set our goals high, and be determined to overcome whatever barriers we encounter.

With the understanding that no database is perfect; according to the Department of Labor, in 2010, the employment-population ratio—the proportion of the population that is employed—in the age group of 16-64 was 28.6 percent for persons with a disability. Among those with no disability in the age group of 16-64 the ratio was much higher (69.7 percent). Across all age groups, persons with a disability were much less likely to be employed than those with no disability. According to the American Community Survey, 35.6% of those in Missouri reporting a vision loss between the ages of 21-64 were employed. Meeting the challenge: We can set our goals higher; we can be determined to overcome barriers to employment; and we can unfetter the environment so people will flourish and realize their full potential.

During this FFY 2011 Family Support Division/Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) served a total of 4,329 individuals with blindness and severe visual impairments in the vocational, independent living (including independent living for older individuals who are blind), and children's programs. Additionally, RSB screened 2,838 individuals for high pressure inside the eye (intraocular pressure); an important aspect of risk from glaucoma; and provided case management services to 513 in the Prevention of Blindness program. Gross sales from the Business Enterprise Program topped 38 million dollars, employing 916 persons (figures include one military installation). During the federal fiscal year 2011, RSB assisted 269 Missourians with blindness to successfully achieve their chosen employment goal through services designed to eliminate their barriers to employment. Twenty-five of those were self-employed.

In closing, I along with the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind offer our earnest appreciation to the Governor of the State of Missouri, Missouri businesses and other stakeholders for their support in creating an environment so that people with disabilities will flourish and realize their full potential.

Sincerely,
Mark Laird, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, Deputy Director

Functions

The SRC's functions include, but are not limited to, acting in partnership with RSB to:

- Review, analyze, and advise RSB regarding RSB's performance of responsibilities, relating especially to eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services; the extent, scope and effectiveness of VR services that RSB provides;
- Assist RSB with the development and review of the State goals and priorities;
- Assist in the preparation of the State plan, amendments to the plan, needs assessments, and evaluations;
- Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of VR services and other functions performed by RSB through Consumer Satisfaction Surveys;
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor of the State of Missouri, and Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) of the U. S. Department of Education;
- Coordinate with other councils within the State;
- Advise RSB and provide for coordination in establishing working relationships between RSB and the Statewide Independent Living Council and Centers for Independent Living in Missouri;
- Select a pool of individuals to serve as impartial hearing officers for VR applicants and recipients who wish to appeal a decision of RSB.

"All the people from RSB were wonderful. My counselor was very supportive and made the whole process easy. I couldn't have been more pleased."

2011 RSB Client

Alix Johnston

Alix Johnston came to Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) in July 2010, after obtaining a diploma in Medical Coding and Billing from Missouri College. Prior to approaching RSB, she worked part-time in the retail industry making minimum wage. Ms. Johnston wanted to find employment consistent with her new skill set, capabilities, strengths and interests and earn a higher salary. Alix's vocational goal was to find a position at a call center in the health care industry.

RSB VR Counselor, Karen Darby, provided job development assistance by searching websites of health care companies to match Alix's vocational goal, skills, and abilities with company needs. In addition, RSB partnered with the Starkloff Disability Institute, a community agency specializing in linking people with disabilities with employers. Through this partnership, Ms. Darby found the position of Customer Care Professional at the Centene Corporation. Ms. Johnston seemed to be a natural fit for the position because of her knowledge of medical terminology and positive attitude.

RSB's Employment Specialist, Sharon Silverstein, assisted Ms. Johnston with the on-line application and on-line testing for job screening. RSB provided the company adaptive computer engineering service to assist the company to support an applicant and eventually an employee. Alix spent time job shadowing a Customer Care Professional to learn more about the everyday duties of this position. Centene managers agreed that she would be a good match for the position and hired Alix as a full-time employee making twice the hourly rate she made previously. She now has a full benefits package as well.

Centene provides health care management services in eleven states. Alix is responsible for handling outbound and inbound calls from Medicaid customers around the country. She has to ask questions, listen well, take good notes, and input the information into her computer. RSB purchased the needed adaptive computer software and hardware including a Closed Circuit Television enabling Ms. Johnston to perform all of her job duties and meet the production demands of the company. Ms. Johnston is happy and says that the work is challenging, and never boring.



Council Members

The membership of the council is comprised of no more than 21 individuals appointed by the Governor, with the following representation mandated by the Rehabilitation Act.

At least one representative from each of the following:

- Statewide Independent Living Council
- Parent Training and Information Center
- Client Assistance Program
- RSB Vocational Counselor
- Community Rehabilitation Program service provider
- State education agency responsible for the public education of students with disabilities
- State workforce investment board
- Disabilities group representing individuals who are blind
- Representative of individuals who has blindness, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing themselves due to disability
- Business, labor and industry
- Advocacy groups for individuals with blindness or other authorized representatives of individuals with blindness who are unable to represent themselves
- Current or former recipients of VR services

The Deputy Director of FSD/RSB as an Ex officio member.

"All the people from RSB were wonderful. My counselor was very supportive and made the whole process easy. I couldn't have been more pleased."

2011 RSB Client

Committees

Evaluation Committee: Beverly Kaskadden - Chair

The evaluation committee handles anything that the Council does to evaluate the performance and/or operation of RSB, such as surveys and annual reports.

Governmental Affairs Committee: Russ McCampbell - Chair

The governmental affairs committee works on things happening at the state and federal level and that are governmental in nature.

Planning Committee: Ceil Callahan - Chair

The planning committee's primary responsibility is the state plan and any other planning operation of the Council. The business network issues will be included in this committee.

Membership Committee: Donna Borgmeyer - Chair

The membership committee works on the membership status of Council members, as well as recruitment of potential new members.

Program & Policy: Gene Fleeman - Chair

The program policy committee handles new policy and or program items from RSB rather than waiting until the next Council meeting.

"Before RSB I had spent my previous years, going back to the age of nine, as a common laborer. When that was taken away from me, I had nowhere to turn, no one to turn to and no hope left in life of being of any use to myself and even less to others. Then someone mentioned Vocational Rehabilitation and it gave hope. As things proceeded, first one thing and then another, would pull me back down. Then I met my counselor at RSB, and job coordinator at RSB, and they instilled in me a belief that I do make a difference. They stayed with me and I learned much and I am willing to keep on trying to make a difference. Once again I would like to thank you for this opportunity."

Year in Review

- SRC approved the state plan.
- Personalized the satisfaction survey resulting in response rates going up from 28% to 36%.
- Automated case and fiscal management system is operational.
- Annual discussion comparing the expense of holding public forums at different locations throughout the state vs. one location – consensus was that there was benefit in continuing to have different geographic locations given the difficulty with mobility that individuals with blindness experience.
- District offices were asked to share regularly their success stories.
- RSB is advised to maximize outreach to increase referral rates; suggested that students be contacted at younger ages to maximize awareness of RSB and services they might provide in the future for that student.
- Emphasis on the Children's program and services to enhance transition.
- Public forums were held quarterly in Kansas City, St Louis, Jefferson City and Springfield. Each had a speaker addressing relevant issues such as discussing the Business Enterprise Program, the new School of Education and Child Development (Drury University), benefits of a functional low vision exam (Mason Eye Clinic in Columbia), what it takes to get a job in today's marketplace, etc.
- Researched the issue of client choice in choosing a service provider.
- RSB asked to review how much direct service is provided by RSB Children's services and how they work in concert with other services to children who have low vision.

"You have no idea how RSB has kept me employed and equipped me to continue with my master's degree with MU! I could not have done it at all. Thank you all!"

2011 RSB Client

It takes more than eyesight to be successful

Joshua Griffith

Joshua Griffith lost his eyesight at age 13 as a result of a viral infection and eye injury. The viral infection destroyed the retina in both of his eyes. He began to have difficulty accessing information while working as an Information Technologist II with the State of Missouri. Mr. Griffith was acquainted with RSB as he had received services many years ago that led to his employment with the State. He reapplied for RSB services in 2008.

Mr. Griffith informed his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC), Genny Asher-Witt, that he used JAWS to read the computer screen and access information. But, not all of the information was accessible, and that prevented him from completing some of his assignments independently. He also found it difficult to take notes while in meetings. RSB evaluated Mr. Griffith's equipment and training needs. The evaluation process revealed an additional need for Braille training to access information, and orientation and mobility training to meet his travel needs.

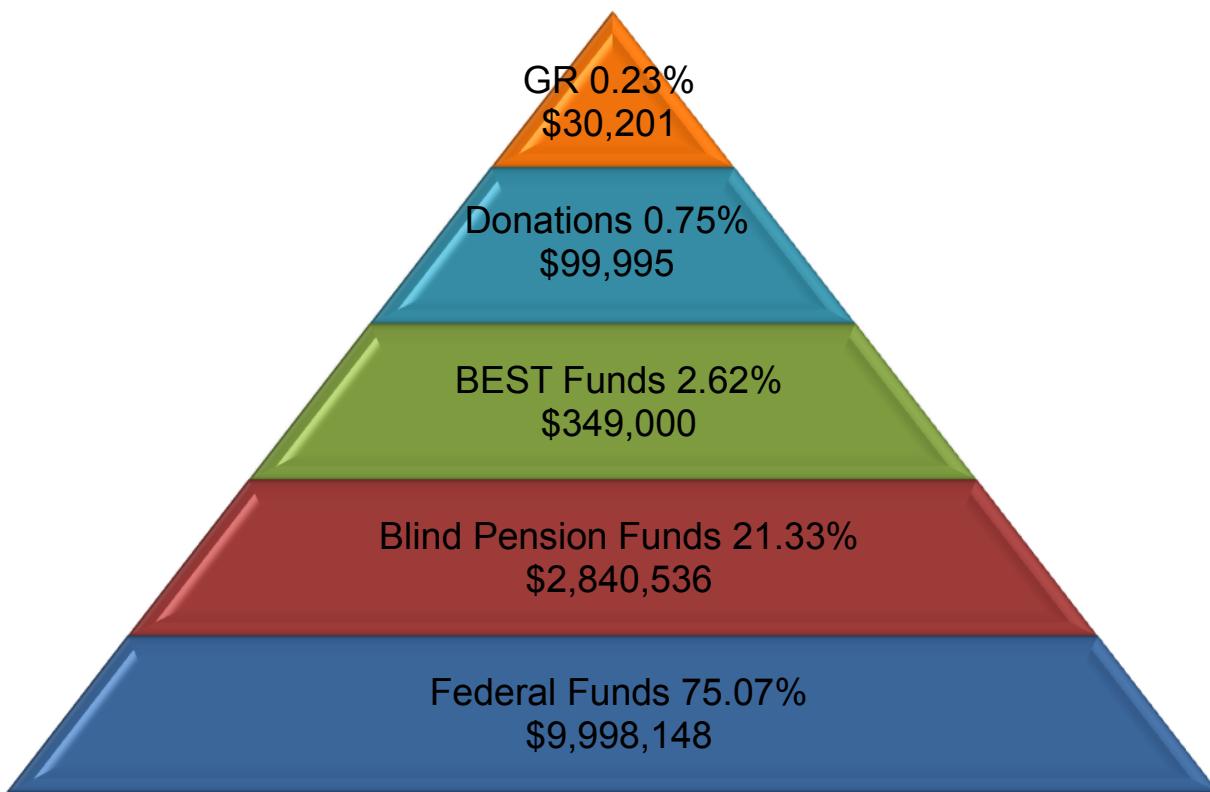


RSB provided assistive technology equipment and rehabilitation engineering services to Mr. Griffith. RSB provided equipment such as a Braille display to use with the computer, and a PackMate for note taking. Mr. Griffith improved his travel skills working with RSB's Orientation and Mobility Specialist and received Braille training from a Rehabilitation Teacher. Mr. Griffith's knowledge of his equipment and his confidence grew; and as a result he

received a promotion to Information Technologist III.

Mr. Griffith states that none of his achievements would have been possible without the services and support of RSB.

Missouri Funding Sources



GR=General Revenue

BEST=Blind Education Screening and Testing program

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services

Individuals who have blindness and visual impairments encounter some common barriers to employment. The services RSB provides compensate, accommodate or remediate barriers to employment for individuals who have blindness/visual impairments in Missouri. Rehabilitation Technology most frequently addresses issues related to access, storage and retrieval of print information. Diagnosis and Treatment of Impairment services enable clients access to needed visual health care and prescribed visual aids to maximize visual access of information. Transportation services address access/participation in vocational training and employment. Training services give attention to the lack of employment preparation and marketable employment skills. Maintenance services provide resources to meet subsistence living expenses to allow full participation in vocational rehabilitation services.

Most Common VR Services Provided

- **Rehabilitation Technology – 39.56%**

The systematic applications needed to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities; including Rehabilitation Engineering services, Assistive Technology devices and Assistive Technology services.

- **Diagnosis and Treatment of Impairments – 14.41%**

Corrective surgery or therapeutic treatment. Examination and services necessary for the prescription and provision of eyeglasses or visual aids, including visual training and other medical or medically related rehabilitation services.

- **Training – 14.13%**

College/University training, occupational/vocational training, on the job training, basic academic remedial or literary training and job readiness training.

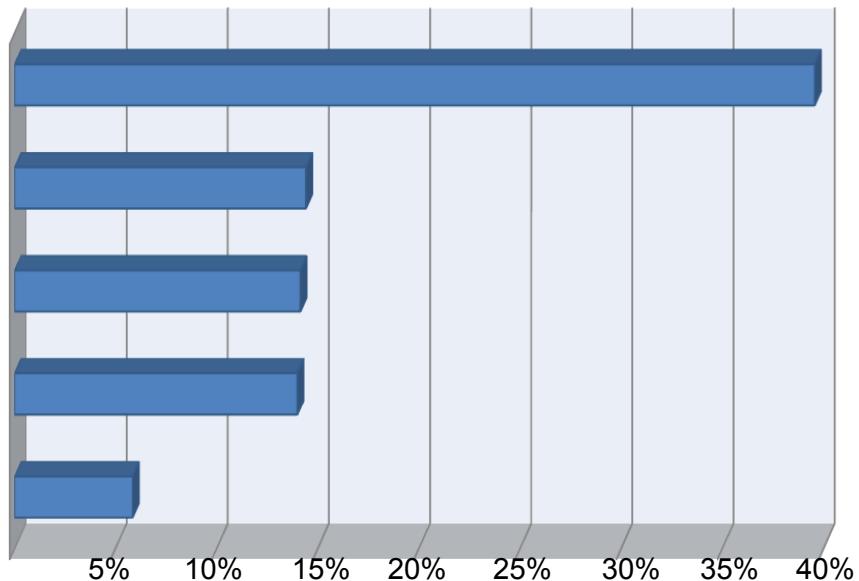
- **Transportation Services – 13.98%**

Travel related expenses that are necessary to enable eligible individuals to participate in VR services, including job placement.

- **Maintenance – 5.84%**

The monetary support provided for short term expenses of food, clothing and

Rehabilitation Technology



Diagnosis and Treatment

Training

Transportation

Maintenance

Public Forums

The SRC has continued to hold public forums throughout the state which allows individuals who are receiving services and individuals who refer clients to RSB to voice opinions and concerns about the services of RSB. During federal fiscal year 2011, the SRC held public forums in the following locations:

1. Kansas City (November 2010)
2. Springfield (February 2011)
3. Jefferson City (May 2011)
4. St Louis (August 2011)

Public Forum Topics Of Discussion:

- The purpose of the Children's program, how staff work with the schools and when to refer a child.
- A 5 year national employment outlook. How to utilize on-the-job training, internships and networking.
- The scope and purpose of the Client Assistance Program.
- How to communicate with your RSB Vocational Counselor to achieve educational and employment goals.

Increasing Participation:

In 2010 the SRC initiated a program to provide expert speakers at the public meetings. This program has educated the public and increased the knowledge of services that are available through RSB and other organizations. 2011 topics included: the Business Enterprise Program and the new School of Education and Child Development at Drury University in Springfield; a 5 year overview of growing career fields; and what a low vision eye exam means at the Mason Eye Clinic in Columbia.

To assist those with difficulty traveling to public forums the Council established phone conferencing capabilities allowing anyone who would like to participate the opportunity.

Consumers Served

During federal fiscal year 2011, RSB opened 460 new cases and served a total of 2,071 consumers in the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

In federal fiscal year 2011, RSB successfully rehabilitated 269 Missourians in their employment goal. The following data profiles show those successful closures:

Successful Closures	
Competitive Employment	221
Homemaker	19
Employment through the Business Enterprise Program	4
Self Employment	25
Total	269

Rehabilitation Rate

83.54% in FFY 2011,
up from 82.41% in FFY 2010.

Self-employment Rate

9.29% in FFY 2011,
down from 13.86% in FFY 2010

Average Hourly Wage at Closure

\$13.97 in FFY 2011,
Up from \$11.68 in FFY 2010

The average annual earnings for a successfully Rehabilitated Client is \$21,963

The following is based on that amount:

MO State Taxes Paid per Rehabilitated Client \$1,093

Federal Taxes Paid per Rehabilitated Client \$2,556

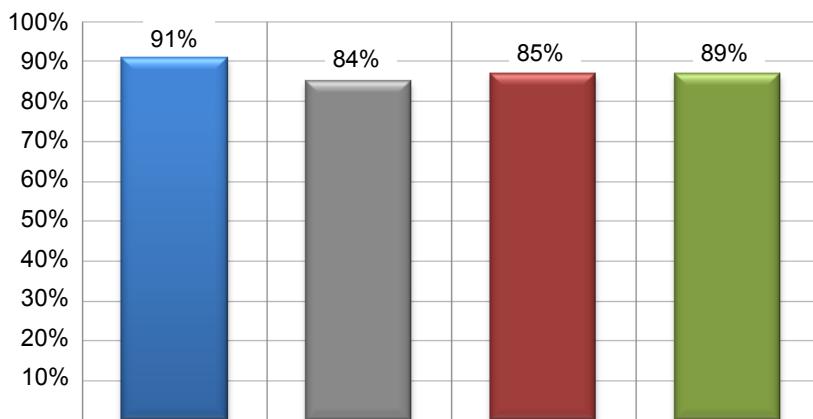
Total Taxes Paid per Rehabilitated Client \$3,649

Total Combined Yearly Taxes Paid by all Rehabilitated Clients \$981,581

Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Consumer Satisfaction Surveys are administered to individuals after closing their Vocational Rehabilitation case with RSB. These surveys are administered on a monthly basis. Two different surveys are sent; one to individuals whose cases are closed in competitive employment and one to individuals whose cases were closed in any status other than competitive employment.

The following is a selection of questions from the survey sent to consumers who were closed in competitive employment and their satisfaction rate.



- My rehabilitation plan was individualized to meet my goal. 91%
- RSB staff helped build my confidence in my abilities. 84%
- Upon completion of my VR plan, I was prepared to seek employment. 85%
- I am pleased with the overall outcome of my experience in the VR program provided by RSB. 89%

Competitive Employment

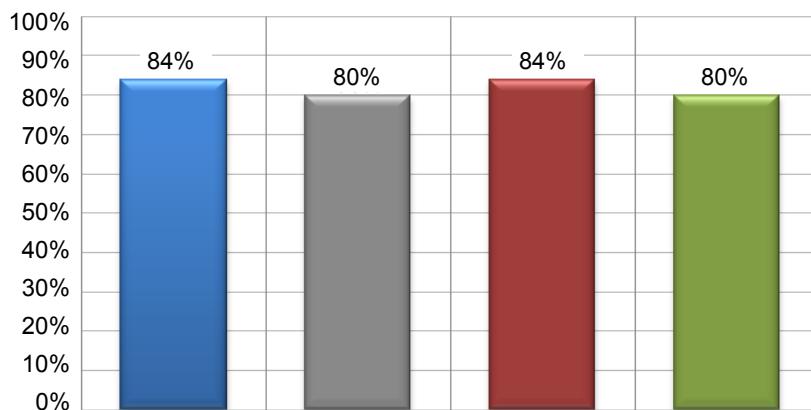
Survey Return rate of 33% Overall Satisfaction level 86%

Status other than Competitive Employment

Survey Return rate of 18% Overall Satisfaction level 77%.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey

The following is a selection of questions from the survey sent to consumers who were closed in a status other than competitive employment and their satisfaction rate.



- My rehabilitation plan was individualized to meet my goal. 84%
- The services RSB provided were adequate to help me reach my rehabilitation goal. 80%
- RSB staff were knowledgeable about my needs as a person who is blind. 84%
- I am pleased with the overall outcome of my experience in the VR program provided by RSB. 80%

Dear Members of Rehab Services for the Blind Board,

I have had a case open with Springfield RSB since 1998. I have benefitted from the available services in the following ways:

1. Opportunity to earn a Bachelor degree from Drury University with support for tuition, tutors and technology assistance for my visual impairment.
2. The positive experience to work with a mobility specialist and the latest mobility technology for individuals with visual impairments.
3. Providing funding for employment location services.
4. Securing a Job Accommodations specialist to aid in the creation of my own business and website using the latest computer technology and software.

I want to thank you for your continued support of RSB, because through their unwavering dedication, I have been able to realize the beginning of my dreams.

Best Regards, Marisa G Clary

Federal Standards and Performance Indicators for FFY 2010

Evaluation standard 1 assesses VR's impact on employment. Standard 1 includes six performance indicators, three of which are primary indicators.	RSB's Performance	Standard Requirement
1.1 Difference between the number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period and the number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the previous period.	Exceeded previous period by 2	Equal or Exceed previous Period
1.2 The percentage of individuals exiting the program during the performance period who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services.	81.87%	68.9%
1.3 The percentage who exit the VR program in employment in integrated settings with or without ongoing support services, self-employment, or BEP (Business Enterprise Program) employment with hourly rate of earnings equivalent to at least the federal or state minimum wage rate, whichever is higher, based on all the individuals exiting the program who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services.	91.56%	35.4%
1.4 The percentage of those individuals identified in indicator 1.3 who have significant disabilities.	99.59%	89.0%
1.5 The ratio of the average hourly earnings of all individuals in competitive employment to the average hourly earnings of all employed in the state.	.759	.59
1.6 The difference in the percentage of individuals who at program entry reported their income as the largest single source of support, and the percentage that reported their personal income as the largest single source of support at program exit.	23.36	30.4
Performance indicator 2.1 measures how successfully an agency is at ensuring that individuals from minority backgrounds have equal access to VR services (minority service rate compared to nonminority service rate).		
2.1 The ratio of the percent of individuals with a minority background to the percent of individuals without a minority background exiting the program who received VR services.	.914 with 98 minorities	.80 with equal or greater than 100 minorities

Evaluation Standards and Performance Indicators for FFY 2010

GENERAL INFORMATION

There are a total of 80 state vocational rehabilitation agencies or commissions that provide rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities in the United States and associated territories. Currently, 24 states have a separate vocational rehabilitation agency or commission that provides services exclusively for consumers who are blind or visually impaired. The skills of blindness are markedly different from the skills required by other disabled persons. The methodology of instructing the blind and confronting the issues of blindness in our society require the development of specialized service programs, with service delivery by specialized personnel.

SUMMARY OF RSB PERFORMANCE

Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to establish evaluation standards and performance indicators for the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program that include outcome and related measures of program performance. RSB passed 5 of the 6 federal performance indicators in standard 1. RSB passed the required minority service rate ratio in Standard and Indicator 2.1, but with less than 100 minorities exiting the program did not meet the requirement in standard 2. RSB is in the top 5 separate blind agencies regarding federal outcome and related measures of program performance.

Highlights

RSB served 4,842 individuals with blindness/visual impairments in 2011.

- 1524 individuals were served in the Older Blind Independent Living Program and 732 closed successfully rehabilitated.
- 513 individuals received case management services in the Prevention of Blindness Program, screening 2,838 individuals for intraocular pressure.
- The Vocational Rehabilitation Program served 2071 individuals, closing 269 in successful employment.
- 433 children received services in the Children's Services Program.
- 301 individuals were served in the Independent Living Program and 101 closed successfully rehabilitated.
- 44 Business Enterprise Program facilities, including 1 military installation, employ 916 people, with gross sales at \$38 million.

It takes more than eyesight to be successful

Robin Dunlap

In May 2009 Robin Dunlap was unemployed and approached Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) for help rejoining the workforce. She was concerned that her unemployment benefits were going to expire. Since becoming a client of RSB, she lost her home to a fire. In addition, her glaucoma progressed, further decreasing her vision to 20/400.

Taking care of her immediate need for housing became a priority. Her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Amy Hall, provided information and referral to the local Independent Living Center and a local low cost housing program. She also encouraged Ms. Dunlap to contact the local Housing Authority. Despite the setbacks, Ms. Dunlap continued to work with her counselor and RSB Job Development Specialist, Sharon Silverstein. Ms. Dunlap's previous work experience operating machines, packaging, and assembly lines, lead her to choose the vocational goal of factory worker. RSB collaborated with job development specialists from community partner, Community Employment Incorporated.

The partnership between Ms. Dunlap, RSB, and Community Employment resulted in her participating in two trial work experiences before ultimately being offered a position at Weissman Design for Dance. She began employment in December 2010 and says that she "can't wait to get up for work now." When she began working she lived in a shelter, but was soon able to find a home. She is working 40 hours per week and takes public transportation to get to work.

Ms. Dunlap works on the assembly line and is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of costume sizes before sending products further down the line for completion. She says that "speed is everything" in her work and that "150 other machines and workers are waiting on me to complete each costume." RSB purchased new glasses, magnifiers, and a talking watch to assist Ms. Dunlap with completing assignments in a timely manner. Her counselor encouraged the use of large print to keep track of changes in job duties.

Ms. Dunlap said she tells anyone who is experiencing vision loss that "they can do anything." She appreciates the services she has received, and feels that she has found a sense of purpose again.

"I cannot think of any way in which RSB could improve. They exceeded my expectations."

2011 RSB Client

Vision for the Future

The Vision Statement for RSB reads:

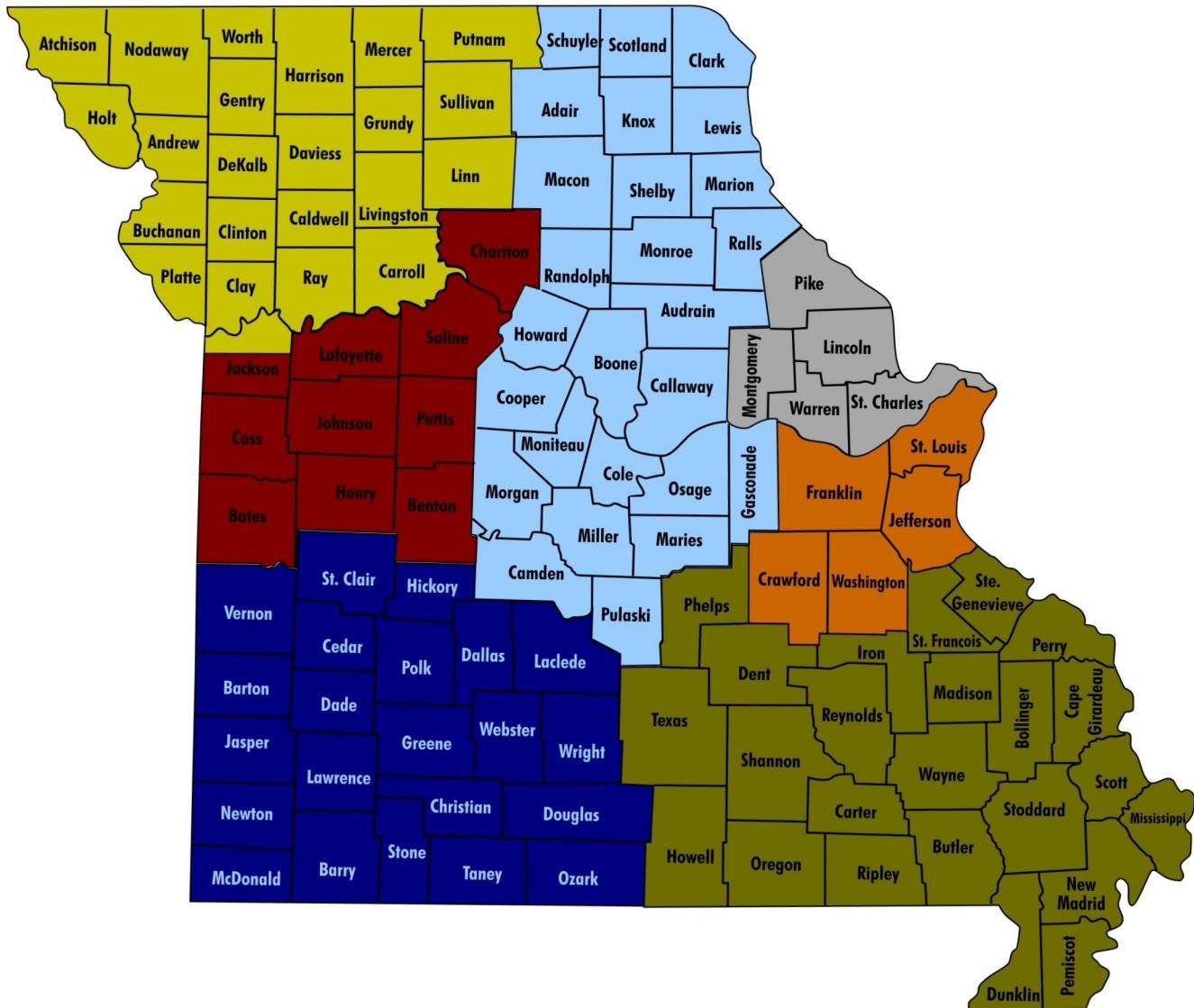
An organization of highly skilled and professional staff at all levels who through their synergism create a dynamic agency that is a State and National leader in rehabilitation for individuals with blindness.

As RSB strives to create opportunities for the personal and vocational success of blind or visually impaired clients, the SRC believes that with the proper training, alternative skills and assistive technology, those individuals who are blind can be vocationally, socially and economically competitive.

The SRC will continue to work cooperatively with RSB to improve the services offered to meet what we consider to be the unique rehabilitation needs of clients with visual disabilities. The following top five strategic priorities were developed by the SRC to ensure ongoing success for visually impaired Missourians:

1. Promote the full inclusion, participation, and integration of Missouri blind and severely visually impaired in the economic, social, cultural and educational mainstream of society.
 2. Through the SRC's' advisory capacity assure that appropriate education and rehabilitation services increase the employment rate of blind and visually impaired in Missouri.
 3. Promote and assure the continuation of specialized vocational rehabilitation services to Missouri consumers who are blind and severely visually impaired through specially trained professional staff with unique skills and knowledge of blindness.
 4. In partnership with RSB, develop, agree to, and review the annual state goals and priorities of RSB in preparation of the state plan and evaluate the effectiveness of services.
 5. In partnership with RSB, conduct a statewide comprehensive needs assessment to determine the unmet rehabilitation needs of blind and severely visually impaired in Missouri.

District Map



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Mark Laird, Deputy Director

Michael St. Julien, Assistant Deputy Director

www.dss.mo.gov/fsd/rsb/index.htm